

“Last night, I received promising news from DHS Secretary Janet Napolitano concerning the exercise of prosecutorial discretion with respect to lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) individuals. To prioritize the use of immigration enforcement resources and remedy excessive deportation policy -- as written in the June 2011 memo from United States Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) Director John Morton (“Morton Memo”) -- a key positive factor in exercising prosecutorial discretion is a ‘person’s ties and contributions to the community, including family relationships’.

After many conversations with President Obama’s administration, a strong push by the LGBT community, and with the help of my colleagues, Secretary Napolitano has announced that she will disseminate written guidance to immigration authorities that confirms the interpretation of the phrase ‘family relationships’ to include LGBT relationships -- specifically the relationships of immigrants in same-sex marriages and partnerships with U.S. citizens.

In the wake of this important victory, we must take a step forward and continue the fight for immigration reform. Current immigration laws are tearing families apart and separating American citizens from their loves ones. No one should have to choose between their spouse and their country, and no family should be left out of the immigration system.

That is why I introduced the Reuniting Families Act, legislation that reunites same-sex couples and protects the civil rights of LGBT individuals and ensures that they are treated equitably through an immigration reform that is both comprehensive and inclusive. The United States is a nation built upon the toil of immigrants hoping to build better lives for themselves and their families. Our country deserves an immigration system that honors that legacy and keeps ALL families intact.”